

Weekly Column for August 11, 2005

The amazing month of August continues in this week's column as we get to talk about yet another terrific event coming up.

This week we have started planning a last minute concert in Riverfront Park on August 25th at 7 p.m. to benefit Tsunami Victims through the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund.

The event came about thanks to Ruth Pelham, who participated with local schools and the community on a variety of projects earlier this year to benefit the victims of last December's horrific tragedy.

In appreciation of those efforts, Pelham, and Lakshmi Damayanthi, a nationally known Sri Lankan singer, actress, and educator will perform a concert in Riverfront Park. Pelham and Lakshmi collaborated on 2002 "Peace Through Music" tour. Lakshmi is visiting the United States for three weeks this month, and is performing as a thank you to all of those who have helped in the months following the Tsunami.

Earlier this year, hundreds of students of from School 16 and School 18 started a campaign to raise money for the Friends of Sri Lanka. Combined the schools raised about \$2,000, which went towards the purchase of new fishing boats for the fisherman in Hambantota.

Lakshmi is an acclaimed Sri Lankan performer, dancer, actress, recording artist, and educator who for twenty years has performed in musical ensembles, as well as on stage and television. She is also a community advocate and the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund liaison in Sri Lanka.

Ruth Pelham, the co-coordinator of the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund met Lakshmi in Sri Lanka in 2002 when they worked together musically as part of a Children's Rights Project entitled "Peace Through Music" and traveled to numerous villages performing and directing a group of 25 young Sri Lankan singers and dancers.

When the tsunami hit, last December, Ruth called Lakshmi to make sure that Lakshmi and Ruth's other friends from her 2002 visit to Sri Lanka were safe. Ruth also expressed her ideas for the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund to Lakshmi who immediately and enthusiastically replied, "I will help you with this project". Lakshmi has passionately and tirelessly fulfilled her promise, and has overseen innumerable details of the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund's projects.

The concert on August 25th will be a thank you to the entire City of Troy, and we hope everyone comes out and enjoys it.

Harry J Tutunjian
Mayor of Troy